



## If You Don't Leave — Establishing a "Safe Place"



If you are in the path of a hurricane and do not evacuate to a shelter, you may need to set up a "safe place" at your home. This place will shelter you and your family from danger as the storm passes through your area. You should carefully choose and prepare a safe place to ride out the storm.

Your first task will be to select a location inside your house. If you are staying in a one-story home, the strongest room is often a bathroom or a walk-in closet near the center of the house and away from windows and exterior doors. In a two-story house, the strongest wall is often a closet or cubicle near a stairwell on the ground floor. If possible, you might even want to reinforce this room with secured wooden beams for added protection. It may be a tight fit, but your safe room should be able to accommodate all of your household members at one time.

Next, you need to prepare your safe room. Stock your safe room with a first aid kit, a supply of food and water, a flashlight with extra batteries, a cellular phone, blankets and pillows, a radio with extra batteries, a fire extinguisher and games and reading materials. If you prepared a disaster supplies kit, you will want to have the items in your kit with you in your safe place or nearby.

You should consider the needs of your family members when stocking your safe place. If you have a baby, you will need extra diapers, blankets and formula. Young children may need to be reassured with a favorite toy or blanket. You will need a plastic bag or place for trash. You will also want tools to assist you if you need to dig your way out of rubble after the storm.

A mattress placed against the wall or over your heads will help protect you and your family members from flying or falling debris. It could get hot and stuffy inside your safe room during the storm, and your family members might appreciate having some ice and some cold drinks in a thermos or cooler. If you plan to bring a pet

This document is IFAS  
publication DH 306.

Adapted by UF/IFAS from:  
*Personal Hurricane Survival  
Guide* (St. Martin County  
Public Safety and Chris  
Procise, St. Martin County  
Cooperative Extension  
Service)

into your safe place with you, you will want a sturdy pet carrier. You should also have copies of your insurance policies in a waterproof container in your safe place. Should your home or the surrounding area be extensively damaged by the storm, you might need to leave immediately after the storm has passed, in which case you will want to remember to bring your wallet and your house and car keys with you into the safe place.



Before the storm, you should talk to your family members about how to prepare for the storm and what types of things to bring into the safe place. Try to keep everyone calm and to explain clearly what you expect from them. You might want to assign each household member a task or group of tasks to complete before the storm hits. This will keep them busy and will help everyone get ready. For example, one family member could get the food and water supplies ready and put them inside the safe place. Another family member could reinforce doors and windows, or move lawn furniture into a storage area. Someone else could keep a close eye on young children and help them select a couple of favorite toys to bring into the safe place.

Immediately before the storm hits, you should get everyone into the safe place. Listen to instructions from your local radio/television station and follow the advice of local authorities. Your family members will need to wear protective clothing and sturdy shoes, as they may need to climb through debris inside your house or outside of it after the storm has passed.

You should discuss possible exit routes from your home with your family and talk about what to do if they smell gas or smoke. In the event that you are separated, you will want to agree upon a meeting place for after the storm, and also make sure everyone knows telephone numbers for one or two out-of-town relatives. Sometimes in the aftermath of a disaster, it is easier to place long-distance phone calls than local ones, so it might be easier for your family to call an out-of-town relative and report their location than for them to try to call each other locally.

You will only be inside the safe place for a few hours, but it is important for you to be well-prepared. If storm conditions are intense, it may not be possible for you to leave the safe place during the storm and retrieve needed items.